During the visit, the issue of additional routes for the Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra was also discussed with the Chinese side. The Chinese side conveyed that they would consider the request according to conditions in Tibet.

Indian joint ventures in Iraq

513. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that USA and UK have approached India or *vice-versa* for setting up joint ventures in Iraq after the lifting of sanctions in Iraq;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have sought MFN status from the new Goverment in Iraq; and

(d) if so, the response of the Iraq Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) No.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No.

(d) Does not arise.

Ties with Central Asian Republics

514. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be please to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have been able to re-establish its traditional ties with Central Asian Republics through the re-opening of the Silk Route;

(b) if so, the significant achievements made during the year 2002-2003; and

(c) the prospects envisaged during 2003-2004?